VERGIL IN SPENSER'S EPIC THEORY

A PORTION OF

SPENSER AND VERGIL

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1928

BY

WILLIAM STANFORD WEBB

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THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis is an attempt to estimate the extent of Spenser's indebtedness to Vergil. Although not a slavish imitator, he was following what he considered to be the poetic theory and practice of Vergil. In particular, the English poet follows the Latin master in attempting to write a patriotic national epic.

Vergil was held by contemporary educators to be particularly valuable in the training of future poets, and definite exercises in imitation of his works were formulated. From what we know of the teaching at the Merchant-Taylor's school it is likely that Spenser was throughly grounded in Vergil and was probably encouraged to translate his poetry into English. In addition to his influence in contemporary pedagogy, Vergil was very popular in the sixteenth century, as we know from the numerous editions and translations of his work. That Spenser should first try his hand at the pastoral was in keeping with the contemporary tradition that the young poet should not at first attempt the epic. In the *Shepheards Calender* Spenser made use of all the Renaissance variations of the pastoral genre, but contributed an attempt to make the pastoral a criticism of national policy. It seems likely that Spenser was here following the lead of Vergil in the *Eclogues*.

Despite the pervasiveness of the influence of the *Aneid* on the *Faerie Queen*, it is convenient to distinguish three phases as it is reflected in Spenser's conceptions of the poet as philosopher, as historian, and as artist. Spenser's avowed purpose " to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline " was in keeping with the Renaissance dogma of didacticism. Vergil, in particular, had been viewed as being successful in presenting moral and political virtues in poetic form. Spenser's conception of the poet also embraced cosmic philosophy, as in the Garden of Adonis passage, with its Lucretian echoes. This was a definite widening of the scope of the epic. In keeping with his conception of the poet as historian, Spenser has a great deal of legendary and historical material in the *Faerie Queen*. The chronicle history passages and his emphasis on the tradition that the Welsh Tudors represented the return of the native Britons reflect this concern. From Vergil too Spenser took his conception of the epic as a reflection of

the spiritual significance of a nation's history. This functional use seems to have been overlooked by the Renaissance critics. When imitated by Spenser, the result is such structurally important passages as Canto 10 of Book 2. The reading by Prince Arthur and Guyon of the chronicle histories of their respective lineages should be compared with Anchises' interpretation for Aeneas of the pageant of heroes and his prophetic shield. Though such devices were conventional in the Renaissance epic, only Spenser has used them functionally as did Vergil. In both epics acquaintance with the country's history is made a matter of supreme importance in the preparation of the epic heroes.

Spenser's indebtedness to Vergil is shown by a large amount of material which the present thesis organizes and analyses. From this analysis it becomes clear that it is the first three books of the *Faerie Queen* which contain all the incidents reminiscent of Vergil and the greater part of the Vergilian echoes. The last three books, published six years later, contain fewer echoes and fainter. Book IV is a story of male friendship, but one looks in vain for a reference to the famous and tragic story of Nisus and Euryalus, which Sidney had so highly commended. A list of parallels are cited to substantiate this assertion.

In examining the possible stylistic influence of Vergil on Spenser, the present thesis confines itself to two main aspects—latinisms and repetition. While recognizing the danger of too labored attributions, it seems possible to list a large number of latinisms whose origin can with great plausibility be attributed to Vergil. Iteration of word or phrase is one of the frequently noted characteristics of Spenser's style. Although this rhetorical device seems at times to be a mere mechanical trick, yet beyond all question Spenser is capable on occasion of achieving through it some of his most telling effects. One need but recall the powerful characterization of Ignaro, as the repetition of " He could not tell " emphasizes the universability of his nescience. Or remember the art by which a phrase iterated or slightly altered can link one stanza to the next. In the seventeenth century this characteristic of Spenser's style was observed and commented upon, and it was held to have been part of his debt to Vergil. R. C.'s preface to " The Chast and Lost Lovers " (1651) by William Bosworth cites verbal repetition as a just reason for calling Spenser the " English Vergil " and Dryden

recognized that repetition or the "Turn" upon a word or thought was one of Vergil's excellences which Spenser had caught. A careful examination of Spenser's poetry gives definite proof of this stylistic indebtedness, though Spenser in his maturity was capable of retaining or altering precisely as seemed best to him. And fond as he was of repetitions, in his phrasal borrowing he but seldom found it convenient to reproduce his original with a minute accuracy of style.

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VERGIL IN SPENSER'S EPIC THEORY

By Wm. Stanford Webb

This study is concerned with three aspects of Vergil's contribution to Spenser's epic theory which have been hitherto somewhat neglected. It deals first with the fundamental problem of "imitation," as the humanists conceived that term, second with the artistic or structual significance of national history in the education of the hero, and third with the inclusion of natural philosophy in the epic. It omits other aspects of that contribution. And it of necessity takes for granted that there does exist in the *Faerie Queene* a sufficient body of Vergilian incidents, details, and echoes to corroborate the views here given—a body larger than that to be inferred from two recent studies,[1] though perhaps smaller than that which might be inferred from the two variorium editions of Todd and of Greenlaw, Osgood, Padelford, and Heffner.

1

Spenser's poetic theory was the product of several strains, which include the poetry and criticism of Medieval and Renaissance poets, of Latin and Greek poets and critics, and the theories of the Renaissance humanists. Although humanism spent much of its vigor in wordy battles over Ciceronianism, yet the learned combatants agreed that excellence in prose was based upon principles equally fundamental in poetry. To cite one out of many, Philipp Melanchthon argues as follows:

> For just as an elegiac poet . . . will turn out better from the reading of Ovid, than if he reads the Odes of Horace; and the heroic poet, if he follows the propriety and the economy of Vergil in arranging and completing the parts, will write more felicitously than if he imitates Lucan or Statius, who are without propriety, bombastic, and obscure. Just so it is certain that our imitator will be better from the reading of Cicero than of other writers. For since in poetry it is apparent that very great strength derives from

[1] Merritt Y. Hughes, *Virgil and Spenser,* University of California Publications in English 2 (1929); Douglas Bush, "Spenser," *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry,* Minneapolis, 1932, pp. 86-123.

imitation, it is certain that in this neighbor art it avails exceedingly. For so great is the similarity between these kindred arts, that most of the better-known passages in Cicero and Livy, if we rightly estimate them, can justly be called poems.[2]

While, to be sure, humanism was primarily concerned with the composition of prose and verse in Latin, yet astute teachers and critics naturally applied humanistic theories to the writing of vernacular poems.

That Spenser was steeped in the theory of imitation and that he considered Vergil his master in epic poetry is apparent from the opening lines of the *Faerie Queene*. Spenser indicates clearly in the Vergilian phraseology of the Proem to Book 1 that he is redeeming his promise of the October eclogue, that he had progressed from pastoral to epic, and that following the precedent of Vergil, his Muse " learns like steps to trace." He is thoroughly conscious that the *Faerie Queene* is a serious work in the tradition of the *Aeneid*. He is deliberately " imitating " Vergil. But since the *Faerie Queene*, a work of art, is obviously no slavish imitation of the *Aeneid*, it becomes pertinent to inquire, What was Spenser's idea of " imitation "?

We find in Spenser, as in sundry of the Renaissance critics, a blending of two ideas: first, literary imitation, which stems from Cicero and Quintilian; at its best it was an accepted method of great artists, and at its worst it became (even as Vida advocated) sheer plagiarism; and second, artistic reproduction or representation of nature, which stems from Aristotle.[3] It is with literary imitation that we are here concerned.

In the Renaissance as in the Age of Augustus, it was held a comely thing to appropriate from the rich storehouse of poetry useful ideas, striking episodes, or felicitous phrases, provided always that they received the stamp of their new masters.[4]

[2] Philipp Melanchthon, " De imitatione," *Elementorum Rhetorices Libri duo* [1st ed. 1531]. Reprinted in Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider, *Corpus Reformatorum* 13. 504.

[3] See Walter L. Bullock, " The Precept of Plagiarism in the Cinquecento," *Modern Philology* 25 (1928). 293-312.

[4] See Tenney Frank, *Vergil a Biography*, New York, 1922, pp. 167 f. George Converse Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace a Study in the Classical Theory of Imitation*, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature 7 (1920). 25-63. Harold Ogden White, *Plagiarism and Imitation during the English Renaissance*, Harvard Studies in English 12 (1835). Bullock, *loc. cit.*

And at the dawn of the Renaissance in Italy, in France, and in England, when a distinguished native poetry had not yet been created, the critics were unwearied in maintaining that the way to a great literature in the native tongue lay through extensive imitation of the masterpieces of Greece and especially Rome. The Pléiade, as Professor Renwick has ably shown, thus exerted a beneficent influence during the formative period of Spenser's art.[5] Spenser, however, was also subject to another strain of influence, which mingled with and accentuated the criticism of the "new poets"—that of liberal humanism. As Professor Renwick has likewise pointed out, Spenser was fortunate indeed to come early under the tutelage of Mulcaster, the headmaster of the newly founded Merchant Taylors' School. Mulcaster, an able classical scholar and an exceptional teacher with advanced educational ideas, introduced young Spenser not only to the "new poets" of France and to the pictorial effectiveness of pageants, but also to the best of liberal humanism, a humanism with a fervent national bias. His sturdy pronouncement of the scholar's love for his own country is well known:

> I love *Rome,* but *London* better, I favor *Italie,* but *England* more, I honor the *Latin,* but I worship the *English.*

It is probable, however, that Spenser's most thoughtful consideration of humanism came during his years at Cambridge and in many a serious discussion with Gabriel Harvey. It was the young and enthusiastic, widely read scholar, not the pedant of later years, with whom the young and enthusiastic Spenser formed a close friendship. And from the letters published by Harvey, we infer that much of the profit of those discussions arose from their desire for a great English poetry.

Now, as Harvey confessed in his *Ciceronianus,* he had been a virulently narrow Ciceronian before he became an ardent liberal.[6] As was well known, there had been in the humanist conception of imitation such liberal exponents as Poliziano, Erasmus, and Sturm. Even the conservative Ascham had helped to popularize such ideas while attacking them in his *Scholemaster* (1570). His friend and correspondent Sturm

[5] W. L. Renwick, *Edmund Spenser an Essay on Renaissance Poetry,* London, 1925.

[6] *Gabrielis Harueii Ciceronianus,* etc., London, 1577.

was a scholar of wide influence, and was noted as an outspoken liberal. Even so, Ascham bestowed his highest commendation upon two of his works dealing with imitation:

Ioan. Sturmius, de Nobilitate literata et de Amissa dicendi ratione, farre best of all, in myne opinion, that euer tooke this matter in hand.[7]

The first of these books, a short treatise on education and imitation, was translated into English and published in 1570, as *A ritch Storehouse or Treasurie.*[8] In it Sturm calls imitation " an ardent desire and loue to attayne to that in the Oration and speache of an other, [which] seemeth worthie of prayse and admiration." He argues effectively that although Cicero is the great general model, one must exercise careful discrimination in the choice of particular models for one's immediate purpose, regardless of where they may be found. More significantly, he holds that one may achieve originality by way of free imitation. He vigorously asserts:

Howbeit, this is also true that although you cannot be comparable or superior to the most perfite: yet is it good and commendable to contend with them in many things: and to go beyonde them in some things, if we be able: and eyther to adde or take away, or chaunge somewhat in the inuentions and ensamples of them, whom we do imitate, and to attempt and labour to doe somewhat, which maye be better: and hath euermore bene graunted to all men in all times. For imitation ought to be free, and not seruile or slauish. Neyther will we that an imitator doe alwayes followe the steps of another: but diuers times and as oft as he can, if he maye doe it decently, let him out runne him that went before.

Even when one is deliberately imitating, one should never be obvious:

For he ought to be a hider of his Arte, which would be a good Imitator. To follow our example in eury point is very childish. . . . But this must alwayes be remembered, that no hiding is worthie prayse, which doth not bestowe in the place of that which wee imitate, a thing eyther as good or better.

[7] G. Gregory Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays,* Oxford, 1904, 1. 13.

[8] *Ioannis Sturmii . . . Nobilitas literata,* Argentorati, 1549. *A ritch Storehouse or Treasurie . . . called Nobilitas literata, written by a famous and excellent man, Iohn Sturmius, and translated into English by T. B[rowne]. Gent.,* London, 1570. Sturm's discussion of imitation begins on page 32.

He follows the accepted tradition by citing with manifest approval some of Vergil's "imitations" of Theocritus and of Homer, explaining wherein their excellence lies: "yet in this great likenesse, what great diuersitie is there? what great varietie?" In like manner Ascham urges the close examination of Vergilian imitations of Homer.[9] Sturm then goes on to defend his nomenclature.

> But peraduenture some man will denie that this was done by imitation, seeing the thinges be not all one in both the writers. I aunswere that imitation is not in things that be all one, but in things that be like.

Here Sturm has struck to the core of the problem. His defense of the term well illustrates the disparity between the true humanistic idea of imitation and the modern. We are contemptuous of the imitative, associating the term with the crude, the spurious, the dull; or we expect to find an imitation a more or less exact duplicate of the original. But for Sturm, imitation was not duplication; it was the method whereby the modern can tap the resources of the great past for creative effort in the present.

In a later work, Sturm enlarges his conception:

> Therefore let there be imitation—vigorous and skilful application of mind to attain those laudable things which you consider excellent in an orator, so that you may seem, if not to surpass him, at least to be as like him as possible, to be his equal.[10]

And he restates his thesis for free imitation:

> We consider, therefore, that there are two radically different kinds of imitators: one like hirelings and slaves, the other like free-born heirs; that is, those who are true possessors and masters of eloquence, who wherever they go, travel on their own roads (as of their own farms and estates). So they appear to move in the course of eloquence and wisdom of speech. What they imitate and observe in others, they sow and reap for themselves.[11]

In fact, Sturm's belief in the virtue of his conception of imitation takes on an almost metaphysical tinge: "What Nature is incapable of performing, Imitation brings to pass."[12]

[9] Smith, 1. 14 f.
[10] *Ioanis Sturmii De Imitatione Oratoria*, Argentorati, 1574, 1. cap. 1.
[11] *Ibid.* 1. cap. 2.
[12] *Ibid.*: "Quod natura facere non potest, imitatio efficit."

For Sturm, Gabriel Harvey expresses a profound admiration; a book of Sturm's strengthened him in his adherence to the liberal school. Harvey's *Ciceronianus*,[13] a lecture delivered at Cambridge during the time of close intimacy with Spenser, is an eloquent and intelligent avowal of liberal humanism. It is therefore more than likely that Spenser and Harvey found it a source for much fruitful discussion. In it Harvey glories in his recent conversion to the liberal school, and quotes the passage which completed that conversion—from the fourth page of Ramus' *Ciceronianus*; it concludes as follows:

> The imitator of Cicero should fix his attention not alone upon the latinity of Cicero, but upon his equipment, his wisdom, his grasp of affairs, and especially upon his virtuous life and morals; not merely upon the epistles, orations, essays (or dialogs), and disputations of Cicero, but much more upon the teachers, the progresses of the arts, the labors requisite to master them, and the long hours spent in preparation, by which so great an orator was trained. And the imitator of Cicero should study the principles and means of Ciceronian eloquence, rather than the ends.[14]

Harvey goes on into an empassioned appeal for that breadth and richness of thought and experience which is the source of appropriate greatness of style. His hearers must live and write in their own age, and not forget that they are English.

> Remember that Homer calls words πτερόεντα, that is, "winged"—as though they might easily fly away if they were not held poised by the weights of things; unite dialectic and learning with rhetoric, the mind with the tongue; learn from Erasmus to cement abundance in things to abundance in words; learn from Ramus to embrace philosophy joined with eloquence; learn from Homer's Phoinix to be not only writers of words but also doers of deeds. Compare with Cicero poets, historians, orators, philosophers, jurists—writers who excell in each type and skill; then distinguish the Ciceronian qualities, that is, all the most excellent and praiseworthy qualities, such as are abundant in all the above (not merely those abundant in Cicero), from the non-Ciceronian, as the beautiful from the ugly; separate the gold from the brass, the iron from both. If you do this, you will be if not precisely a Roman, at least a French-

[13] Published in 1577; probably delivered in January 1575—G. C. Moore Smith, ed., *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia,* Stratford-upon-Avon, 1913, p. 13. Spenser left Cambridge in 1576.

[14] Harvey, 34. From *P. Rami, Regii Eloquentiae et Philosophiae Professoris, Ciceronianus,* Paris, 1557, p. 4.

man, a German, an Englishman, or an Italian. That in my judgment is surely not a counterfeit, but the most perfect and most pure Ciceronian.[15]

And in a subsequent lecture (*Rhetor,* 1577), he voices his appreciation of English and foreign masters of the vernacular.

Harvey's enthusiastic acceptance of the broad principles of a liberal humanistic theory of imitation thus came at the time that he and Spenser were both vitally concerned with the art of writing. And if Harvey's incipient pedantry ever got the upper hand, we can imagine Spenser's replying somewhat as follows: "For, why a Gods name may not we, as else the Greekes, haue the kingdome of oure owne Language." [16]

Such, in brief, was the current of liberal humanism in which, we may fairly assume, Spenser was immersed during his years at Cambridge. Without minimizing the influence of the Pléiade, we can see that Spenser was developing under theories which were largely applicable to his creative problems. When we translate these theories for the composition of Latin prose into theories for the writing of English poetry—a translation which is entirely consistent with what we know of the scholar-poet Spenser—we perceive that much of Spenser's poetic theory and practice is in accordance with them. Vergil thus becomes for him the great master. *The Shepheardes Calender* is in imitation of the *Eclogues,* though specific indebtedness is slight. For Spenser had assimilated the principles of liberal humanism. He attempted to do in his own time and in his own way what Vergil had done in his. Through such imitation Spenser wrote an original poem.

So, for the *Faerie Queene,* Vergil again was the great master. How thoroughly Spenser knew the *Aeneid,* a host of echoes (many doubtless unconscious) bear indisputable witness. Yet it is seldom that we see Spenser writing with the *Aeneid* open before him. He had learned well the basic principles of the humanists. Sturm and Ascham held that the virtue of the gifted and accomplished imitator lay not in mechanical transcribing but in recreating borrowed material.[17] Sturm and

[15] Harvey, p. 45.

[16] "Immerito's" Letter of April 1580.

[17] Spenser's one large debt to Vergil for material (*F. Q.* 3.2) is from the *Ciris,* not the *Aeneid.*

Harvey held that the way to creative excellence lay through imitation not servile but free, that the imitator should use his masters more as precedents than as models, and that as often as possible he should overgo his original. Harvey and Ramus held that imitation was not a matter of duplicating literary style or mechanics, plot or form; it was much more fundamental. The gifted imitator should reproduce in his own time, and with requisite intelligence, the study and preparation, the life and experience of his master, and by so doing he would avail himself of those dynamic sources which produced great and significant literature. As Professor Greenlaw put it,

> This [an ethic and conduct of life] is what Spenser sought in the *Faerie Queene,* no formal imitation of Vergil—he was not concerned with formal imitation; but application of Vergil's method of interpreting life and conduct to the theme he proposed to treat.[18]

The liberal principles of these humanists—however Spenser came by them—were all basic with him. They shed light on Spenser's poetic theory. We can see more clearly what Spenser had in mind when he said that Chaucer was his master, or clearly intimated that he was following Vergil. We have been accustomed to raise a skeptical eyebrow over these acknowledgements of discipleship, to feel that Spenser was merely indulging in a conventional gesture, to hold that certain other writers were Spenser's major "sources"; and we are in part justified in doing so. This modern point of view, however, is not completely valid, for it fails to appreciate certain intellectual and artistic currents which were strong in Spenser. An obvious case in point is that commonplace of Renaissance criticism—the progression from pastoral to epic. Is Spenser merely repeating a thread-bare convention? Or is it, rather, that Spenser is conscious of the great Vergilian tradition, is proclaiming the high calling of the poet, is thus taking his rightful place among the great? As with Harvey and the other liberal humanists, to be a follower of Cicero was to appreciate excellence wherever it could be found and to express one's ideas in the most appropriate style; so for Spenser, to be a follower of Vergil was to strive for poetic excellence by the aid of those

[18] Edwin Greenlaw, *The Province of Literary History,* Johns Hopkins Monographs in Literary History 1 (1931), p. 128.

principles which Vergil exemplified. And finally, inspired by Mulcaster and Harvey, Spenser developed a vital spirit of nationalism. Moreover, he responded to Vergil's strong patriotic feeling in a peculiarly significant way.

2

Spenser's fervent nationalism was a controlling factor in his life and his poetry. His early adherence to the party of the Earl of Leicester, his veiled but strong attack on the French marriage with its dangerous potential influence on England are central in *The Shepheardes Calender* and the *Mother Hubberds Tale*. Even the rather boyish *Culex* of Vergil takes on a new dignity when Spenser's translation (*Virgils Gnat*) becomes an allegorical account of the reward he received for his patriotic advice on national affairs. He returns to the theme in *Colin Clouts Come home againe*, and clearly envisions England as Mistress of the Seas. And the *Faerie Queene* is in part Spenser's reading of historical and contemporary England, her great past, her commanding figures, her acute problems, and her great future.

The general problem of the relation of history to epic, exercises much of the best thought of Renaissance critics. From Daniello (1536)[19] to Sidney and Spenser, the critics deal with various phases of the problem—such matters as differences in structual technique (ab ovo; in medias res), in point of view (true to fact; true to imagination), and in moral utility (Epic excites keener interest in ethical conduct, and can insure "poetic justice"). And in the main they hold with Scaliger[20] that epic poets get their arguments from history, variously altered or touched up, but fundamentally historical; in other words, "historical fact idealized."

[19] Ralph C. Williams, "The Originality of Daniello," *The Romanic Review* 15 (1924). 121.

[20] *Iulii Caesaris Scaligeri Poetices libri septem, Editio secunda* (1581) 1. cap. 2. See Ralph C. Williams, "The Purpose of Poetry, and particularly the Epic, as discussed by Critical Writers of the Sixteenth Century in Italy," *The Romanic Review* 12 (1921). 13, 19. But Castelvetro thinks differently: "Now the matter of poetry ought to be similar to the matter of history, and to imitate it; but it ought not to be the same."—H. B. Charlton, *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*, Publications of the University of Manchester, Comparative Literature Series No. 1 (1913). 50.

Spenser, in the Letter to Raleigh, repeats the well-established Aristotelian comparison of the poet and the historian, and contrasts the method of the "Poet historical" with that of the "Historiographer." Moreover, the Muse of the *Faerie Queene* —"O holy Virgin chiefe of nine"—is Clio,[21] the Muse of History.

Except for a fair number of episodic digressions, Spenser would have us believe that "all this famous antique history" is not just "th'aboundance of an idle braine" and "painted forgery," but is "matter of iust memory." He assures the Queen:

> And thou, O fairest Princesse vnder sky,
> In this faire mirrhour maist behold thy face,
> And thine owne realmes in lond of Faery,
> And in this antique Image thy great auncestry.[22]

Spenser's conception of the *Faerie Queene* as history was repeatedly stressed by Professor Greenlaw, as, for example, when he wrote:

> That he [Spenser] looked upon himself as an historical poet, aiming at the interpretation of English history though using a method different from that of an historiographer; that he was an antiquary moved by the same spirit as that which animated the noble group of students of Britain's past; that the historical portions of the poem are clues to its meaning, not mere intrusions of old work into the romance, are all matters of importance.[23]

However, our present concern is not with Spenser's general historical intention, nor with his view of the present state of England, but with his overt use of national history.

[21] Frederick M. Padelford, "The Muse of the 'Faerie Queene'" [Calliope], *Studies in Philology* 27 (1930). 111-124; Josephine Waters Bennett, "Spenser's Muse," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 31 (1932). 200-219; Henry Gibbons Lotspeich, *Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser,* Princeton, 1932, pp. 83-85. To the wealth of erudition employed by Mrs. Bennett and Dr. Lotspeich in showing that Spenser's Muse is Clio, I offer one poor item. Richard Niccols, an admirer and avowed imitator of Spenser, in *The Induction* to *Englands Eliza* (1610), goes Spenser one better:

> Loe here the cheefest of the daughters nine
> Of sacred Memorie and Ioue diuine,
> Great Clioe's selfe.

[22] Proem to Book 2.

[23] Edwin Greenlaw [ed. Ray Heffner], *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory,* Johns Hopkins Monographs in Literary History 2 (1932). 2.

In the two chronicle-history passages, is recounted the roll of British sovereigns from Brute, grandson of Aeneas, to Elizabeth. In Book 2. 10, Prince Arthur reads the chronicle of British kings, from Brute to Uther Pendragon; Guyon reads the Elf geneaology, which is a veiled account of the Welsh princes and the house of Tudor, ending with Tanaquill (Elizabeth). In Book 3. 3, Merlin reveals to Britomart the illustrious descendants that are to spring from her marriage with Artegal; the seer begins with the son of Gorlois (as some legends made Arthur), extends his roll to Cadwallader (the last of the British kings); ignores the Saxons and their successors, but sketches briefly the Welsh princes, and prophesies the accession of the Tudors.

If we see in these passages merely a compliment to the reigning house, we see in Spenser an amateur writer giving us a mechanical imitation of an epic trick which Ariosto and Tasso had picked up from Vergil, without perceiving the philosophic purpose which informs Vergil's view of Roman history. Or, say some, Spenser merely incorporated some early work, with dubious economy. Such cavalier treatment ignores the possibility that Spenser was genuinely concerned with the substance of the passages, however much he may have failed to transmute it into moving poetry. As Professor Greenlaw showed,

> His praise of the Tudor house . . . was the expression of a philosophy of history, of a conception of British destiny. He did not invent it, but found it ready to his hand in a score of places. He glorified it, so that it became part of the structure itself of the greatest work of the imagination produced during the Elizabethan period.[24]

The fact that Spenser did historical research and included it in the *Faerie Queene*, and the fact that Spenser had a philosophy of history, allies him with the great Elizabethan antiquarians. Still, a question of importance remains: How did the creative artist Spenser give artistic value to his philosophy of history? How could Spenser drive home to his readers that his philosophy of history was fundamental to the poem? The answer, I believe, lies in Spenser's acute perception of Vergil's purpose when Vergil introduced inspiring visions of Roman history into the *Aeneid*.

In the *Aeneid* Vergil fused legendary, historical, and con-

[24] *Ibid.*

temporary persons into an epic of Rome's greatness. One peculiar quality of the *Aeneid* is the intense national spirit which animates it. If the hero was not a Roman, his was a distinction equally great: he laid the foundations upon which the power and the justice and the majesty of Rome's empire was later to rise. The full wealth of Vergil's antiquarian research and of his generous appreciation of patriotic endeavor was dedicated to the honor of the Roman empire.

Yet Vergil's interest in the national past was by no means purely antiquarian or narrowly historical. Vergil had a philosophy of history; he perceived in the nation's history a spiritual significance. And he gave this significance its most effective artistic expression in Aeneas' descent into the Underworld. As Professor Frank has cogently remarked:

> The dramatic purpose of the *descensus* was of course to complete for Aeneas the progressive revelation of his mission, so skilfully developed by careful stages all through the third book, to give the hero his final commands and to inspire him for the final struggle. Then the poet realized that he could at the same time produce a powerful artistic effect upon the reader if he accomplished this by means of a vision of Rome's great heroes presented in review by Anchises from the mount of revelations, for this was an age in which Rome was growing proud of her history.[25]

We remember that Aeneas is twice shown glimpses of that glorious future which is in store for his race. Anchises in the Underworld interprets for him the pageant of the heroes who are to carve out and establish Rome's empire. This revelation enables Aeneas to perceive the high destiny that is the lot of the Trojan remnant, and to work out his share in its accomplishment. Later, as a further incentive, before joining battle with those who oppose that destiny, Aeneas is given a marvelous shield. Though modeled on Achilles' shield, it is made structually significant by having depicted upon it " res Italas Romanorumque triumphos " (*Aen.* 8. 626). It is a high patriotism indeed which Vergil has thus embodied in artistic structual form, making a vision of the nation's history the crowning event in the preparation of the hero.

[25] *Op. cit.*, pp. 189 f. Professor Frank here cites Heinze, *Epische Technik*, pp. 82 ff.

This aspect of Vergil's thought seems not to have been stressed by Renaissance commentators on epic technique. This peculiar functional use of national history received little if any comment. Doubtless, the explanation lies in the fact that Italian critics set the pace; and an Italian of the *cinquecento* could experience no living Italian nationalism; he could find patriotic feeling only in the ruins of Rome or the visions of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch.

The inclusion of an account of the geneaology or progeny of the hero was, of course, a commonplace of epic and romance. And aristocratic pride in family did serve to spur the hero to greater deeds. Tasso, in fact, does borrow from Vergil the device of the pictorial shield,[26] and his Rinaldo is inspired with a desire for fame, which he wins. Although the list of the illustrious concludes with Alphonso II, Tasso's patron, yet Tasso can give us only praise of a family ruling a portion of the Italian peninsula; he cannot appeal to any deeply felt and nation-wide patriotism. In Tasso, as in Ariosto, these genealogical lists are merely interesting and flattering ornaments. In Vergil, it is wholly otherwise, for a knowledge of Rome's great history, a revelation of Rome's destiny, becomes necessary to the fulfilment of Aeneas' mission. And, I believe, Spenser perceived Vergil's intention and found in the *Aeneid* epic precedent for his functional use of British history.

The first of Spenser's chronicle-history passages is in Book 2. As has been pointed out,[27] a comparison of the structure of Book 1 and Book 2 clearly shows that Cantos 9 and 10 of Book 2 correspond to Canto 10 of Book 1, in which Redcrosse is brought by Una to the House of Holiness, where he undergoes the final preparation for completing his quest. In Book 2. 9, Prince Arthur and Guyon come to the Castle of Alma (the body in which the soul dwells). There begins their final and

[26] After his enervating sojourn with Armida, while Rinaldo is being led back to Godfrey's host, he meets the Sage. The Sage reads Rinaldo a lesson on temperance, points to the shield on which are blazoned the deeds of his illustrious ancestors, and in stirring words arouses in Rinaldo the desire to emulate them; the list follows; the Sage is sorry that he could not also depict the future, but does reveal the worth of Alphonso II.

[27] Ernest A. Strathmann, "The Structure of Book II of the *Faerie Queene*," Appendix X in *The Works of Edmund Spenser a Variorum Edition*. Baltimore, 1933, 2. 467-471.

necessary preparation. They are both instructed in physiology and in the interrelation of body and mind. But this is not sufficient. They complete their necessary preparation by reading the chronicle-history of their respective races. Spenser stresses the importance of this passage in the Proem to Book 2 and by the invocation just preceding the passage. He specifically asserts that he is recounting " the famous auncestries Of my most dreaded Soueraigne." [28] Furthermore, that Spenser intended something more than praise of Queen Elizabeth—

> Thy name O soueraine Queene, thy realme and race— [29]

that his was a conception of history national in its scope, is evident in Prince Arthur's reaction to his historical reading:

> Deare countrey, . . .
> How brutish is it not to vnderstand,
> How much to her we owe, that all vs gaue,
> That gaue vnto vs all, what euer good we haue.[30]

On the implications of the entire passage, Professor Greenlaw wrote:

> It is a compliment to the Tudor house, but it is also something far more significant. Like Camden, Spenser subscribes to a belief in the value of this antiquarianism to the development of national spirit. So Arthur, confronting a crisis, derives strength and faith not from holy church, like Redcross, but from the history of his people.[31]

With the completion of their historical studies, their preparation is likewise complete. Prince Arthur repels the brutish and sensual hosts that would destroy the Castle of Alma—and the national archives—and is now ready for whatever adventures may befall him in aftertimes. Guyon immediately proceeds to the successful accomplishment of his quest.

Thus Spenser's philosophy of history is wrought into the structure of the *Faerie Queene*, even as Vergil's is wrought into the *Aeneid*. But should we dismiss it as a fortuitous parallel? Is it not rather a deliberate similarity in philosophic and artistic intent? For we do know that the famous sixth book of

[28] 2. 10. 1. [29] 2. 10. 4. [30] 2. 10. 69.
[31] *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory*, pp. 99 f.

the *Aeneid* was the one upon which Spenser drew most copiously. The editors of Spenser have found more reminiscences, incidents, and echoes both conscious and unconscious, from *Aeneid* 6 than from any of the remaining books. Earlier in Book 2, Spenser had *Aeneid* 6 fresh in his mind, for Guyon's descent into Mammon's realm of the Underworld bears some unmistakable resemblances to the descent of Aeneas.[32] And, curiously enough, two possible Vergilian echoes imbedded in Spenser's chronicle-history come, one from *Aeneid* 6, the other from the shield of Aeneas.[33] Finally, in Vergil and in Spenser the historical passages are immediately preceded by somewhat similar introductory matter. Anchises gives Aeneas a discourse upon the nature of the soul and its interrelation with the body; Prince Arthur and Guyon are instructed in physiology and the interrelation of body and mind. However this may be, the salient fact remains: Spenser, unlike his Italian contemporaries, but like Vergil, makes a knowledge of the nation's history and destiny the final preparation for the hero.

The second of Spenser's chronicle-history passages, in Book 3, completes his review of British history. As before, Spenser stresses the importance of this material by a special invocation:

> Begin, O *Clio*, and recount from hence
> My glorious Soueraines goodly auncestrie.[34]

As before, knowledge of the nation's history is vital to the career of the knight; and its effect is more startlingly apparent than in the earlier passage.

[32] Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 377-379. And a different approach might well reveal even stronger Vergilian influence in this passage.

[33] The second *Brute*, the second both in name,
And eke in semblance of his puissance great. (2. 10. 23)
qui et nomine reddet
Silvius Aeneas, pariter pietate vel armis
egregius. (6. 768 ff.)—Jortin.

Tasso has

Ma tra gli altri, mi disse, Alfonso io sceglio,
Primo in virtú, ma in titolo secundo. (*Ger. Lib.* 17. 90).

Spenser also mentions the "forreine Morands" (2. 10. 43). Geoffrey has merely "rex Moranorum"; nor does Miss Harper (*The Sources of the British Chronicle History in Spenser's Faerie Queene*, Philadelphia, 1910, p. 100) indicate that his followers were more explicit. Cf. Vergil's phrase from the shield of Aeneas "extremique hominum Morini" (8. 727)—Upton.

[34] 3. 3. 4.

Britomart, having fallen desperately in love with an unknown knight whose image she has seen in a magic glass fashioned by Merlin, languishes in lovesickness. Her malady stubbornly persists; she with her nurse goes to the cave of mage Merlin for help in her distress. Merlin reveals to her the future: she will wed Artegal (whose image she had seen), and from them will spring a line of British kings. The last of these kings will be driven from England; the British remnant will retire to Wales; after due lapse of time their Welsh descendants will succeed to the English throne.

> Then shall a royall virgin raine, . . .
> But yet the end is not.

The effect upon Britomart is electrical; the languishing damsel becomes a doughty and invincible lady-knight. Here a knowledge of British history has actually created a "hero."

Now, as Professor Dodge has ably shown,[35] the influence of the *Orlando Furioso* (especially Canto 3) is very strong in this passage. And Professor Hughes, in his analysis of the passage, has noticed some Vergilian reminiscences and the similarity between the Stoic advice of the Sibyl and the words of Merlin. He finds that

> In comparison with Ariosto, Spenser shows hardly a mark of his ultimate Virgilian source. . . . Britomart's experience in the cave owes its setting to the *Furioso* and the substance of its revelation of history to British chronicle sources, but it owes its existence to Virgil.[36]

In taking the point of view that this passage is ultimately Vergilian, Professor Hughes ignores the possibility that it is peculiarly Vergilian—not, to be sure, in specific content; but in purpose. He does not mention the vital matter of Spenser's perception of the supreme importance of a knowledge of the nation's history to the career of the hero, a conception which underlies Spenser's previous use of history in the careers of Prince Arthur and Guyon. This conception is fundamental in

[35] R. E. Neil Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto," *PMLA* 12 (1897). 176. Professor Dodge saw in the two accounts of Britomart's youth (early training in arms, Canto 2. 6-7; without any training in arms, Canto 3. 53, 57) an inconsistency, which he accounted for by saying that Spenser "superimposes Tasso upon Ariosto"—page 196, Note 1. However, Britomart's statement, in Canto 2, of the reason she is in arms is a deliberate and ingenious falsehood. And the inconsistency disappears if we assume that her statement concerning her early training in arms is likewise part of her pious endeavor to camouflage her real sentiments.

[36] *Op. cit.*, pp. 354 f.

the *Aeneid*. It reappears in Renaissance criticism and Italian epic in the debased form of flattering praise of a ruling family, not of patriotic appreciation of the dynasty that unites the strength and hope of an entire nation.

We have, then, in these two chronicle-history passages not a mechanical reproduction of a trick of epic technique. We have a philosophy of history, which Spenser shared with the great Elizabethan historians. But Spenser was also an artist, trained by the liberal humanists in that kind of imitation which looks below the surface of great art into the causes of things. He perceived, I believe, more clearly than did his contemporaries, Vergil's philosophy of history and the structual way by which Vergil gave artistic form to that philosophy. So Spenser in fashioning his heroes gives like artistic form to his philosophy by making, as did Vergil, a knowledge of national history the crowning experience in the preparation of the hero.

3

Once again, in another aspect of Spenser's thought, we find the scholar-poet reproducing in his own way the kind of thing that Vergil had done. Naturally, Spenser read his *Aeneid* in the light of Renaissance critical theory, and, as before, followed the principles of liberal humanism in getting at the roots of things. And again, I believe, Spenser found in Vergil a precedent which is lacking in his chief Italian models, Ariosto and Tasso. This aspect of Spenser's epic theory has to do with one phase of the conception of poetry as philosophy.

It was a commonplace of Renaissance criticism that the writing of epic poetry worthy of the name was a very serious business. It required long and arduous study. Poetry was a learning; and formerly, says Sidney, was held in " almost the highest estimation of learning." [37] It was the " learned Muses " whom Spenser most frequently invokes. For his highest flight, he implores the " greater Muse " to

> Kindle fresh sparks of that immortall fire,
> Which learned minds inflameth with desire
> Of heauenly things.[38]

[37] Sir Philip Sidney, " An Apologie for Poetrie " in Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays* 1. 151.

[38] *Mutabilitie* 7. 2.

Since poetry was a learning, since one of its dual Horatian functions was to teach, the poet had need of wide-ranging scholarship. Lionardi, for example, had insisted " that to be a good poet, one must be a good historian, a good orator, and a good natural and moral philosopher as well." [39] Minturno and Scaliger recognized learning as chief among poetic excellences, especially in the epic as exemplified by Vergil. Minturno asks:

> What science of so varied and obscure investigation is there, what study of so wonderful and recondite doctrine, of which Vergil has not scattered the principles and the seeds in his poems? [40]

Scaliger is positive that " Nothing of the more solid erudition is out of place in the temples of the Muses." [41] Even Castelvetro, who anticipates the modern aesthetic approach by arguing that learning and science are extraneous to poetry, bears witness to the strength of the " heresy." And, to come nearer to Spenser, Gabriel Harvey (c. 1574) affirmed his ideal:

> It is not sufficient for poets, to be superficial humanists: but they must be exquisite artists, & curious vniuersal schollers.[42]

In the main, it is apparent what these critics and the rest of their brotherhood had in mind. They were referring to the knowledge and wisdom which the learned poet naturally wove into the fabric of the entire poem. But allied with this observation were two prevalent Renaissance conceptions: first, the deep wisdom and philosophy which the poet was supposed to conceal from common eyes by means of allegory, and second, the idea that poetry was philosophy teaching by example. Thus, it became necessary for the poet to be well versed in philosophy; else what he sought to teach would be either erroneous or trivial.

Horace, of course, long before, had written to the Pisos:

> scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.[43]

Later, the *Ars Poetica* was made over into a series of prose canons for the composition of poetry, which were published in

[39] J. E. Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance,* New York, 1925, p. 43.

[40] Quoted by Charlton, *op. cit.,* p. 77.

[41] *Ibid.* [42] *Marginalia,* p. 161. [43] *Ars Poetica,* 309.

1560; and a translation of them was appended to Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586).[44] This observation of Horace thus became:

> 26. A Poet, that he may be perfect, hath neede to haue knowledge of that part of Philosophy which informeth the life to good manners. The other which pertaineth to naturall thinges is lesse plausible, hath fewer ornaments, and is not so profitable.

To what extent the *Faerie Queene* is informed with moral and political philosophy, a vast body of commentary bears effective witness. Spenser's purpose was to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline," even as Vergil's was to portray "a good gouernour and a vertuous man . . . in the person of Aeneas." To that end, Spenser drew upon a wealth of classical, medieval, and Renaissance culture.

It is, however, that part of philosophy "which pertaineth to naturall thinges" with which we are here concerned. Now, it is not surprising that poetry devoted to natural philosophy was held to constitute a *genre* of its own. Sidney, to take a convenient example, distinguishes three kinds of poets.[45] The first is made up of the religious poets who "imitate the inconceiuable excellencies of GOD."

> The second kinde is of them that deale with matters Philosophicall; eyther morrall, as *Tirteus, Phocilides,* and *Cato*; or naturall, as *Lucretius* and *Virgils Georgicks*; or Astronomicall, as *Manilius* and *Pontanus*; or historical, as *Lucan.*

The third contains the "right Poets," of whom the "*Heroick*" are first. Yet the Renaissance critics, with Scaliger far surpassing the rest, bestowed enthusiastic praise upon Vergil for the numerous bits of natural philosophy with which he had enriched the *Aeneid.* And they urged the poets of their day not to neglect science.[46]

Harvey, in particular, stressed the value of scientific studies

[44] Smith, *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 1. 290 and Note. [45] Smith, *op. cit.,* 1. 158 f.

[46] Professor Renwick (*op. cit.,* p. 137) cites Cinthio's (*Discorsi,* p. 193) amusing advice for the shrewd poet to take a short-cut to the requisite scientific knowledge: "It is useful also to the writer to talk with practitioners of those arts of which he is about to treat, . . . with naturalists about the origins of things and their generation; . . . for all that is in nature being a proper subject for the poet, and not less that which the liberal and mechanical arts have in themselves, it would be too great a burden if he had to learn all that before he set himself to write."

in the education of the literary artist. He ended his *Ciceronianus* with this earnest appeal to his students:

> if you desire to be true Ciceronians, not counterfeit, . . . you must approach your Cicero with this mind and purpose: never to come to him without leaving him better students not only in grammar and rhetoric, but also in dialectics, ethics, politics, and history; sometimes also in physics and law, and even in cosmography.[47]

At approximately the same time, Harvey jotted down in his copy of *The Surueye of the World* (1572) his well-known comments on science and poetry:

> Other commend Chawcer, & Lidgate for their witt, pleasant veine, varietie of poetical discourse, & all humanitie: I specially note their Astronomie, philosophie, & other parts of profound or cunning art. . . .
>
> M. Digges hath the whole Aquarius of Palingenius bie hart: & takes mutch delight to repeate it often.
>
> M. Spenser conceiues the like pleasure in the fourth day of the first Weeke of Bartas. Which he esteemes as the proper profession of Urania.[48]

And he recorded the reaction of the young Spenser to his own enthusiasm for scientific studies:

> The same Spenser, though not entirely unacquainted with the sphere and the astrolabe, is ashamed of his lack of skill in astronomical canons, tables, and instruments.[49]

Although Spenser's interests and attainments in scientific pursuits may have been less than Harvey thought desirable, yet Bryskett seems to have been impressed that Spenser was " not onely perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in Philosophie, both morall and naturall." [50] And Spenser did incorporate natural philosophy into the *Faerie Queene*. In two extended philosophical passages, he is not directly concerned with either ethics or politics, but with a cosmic philosophy which is but indirectly applicable to human conduct. The Garden of Adonis and the Mutabilitie deal with matters which earlier Renaissance epic had left severely alone. But for them

[47] *Op. cit.*, pp. 65 f.
[48] *Marginalia*, pp. 160 f. On the title page is written " Gabrielis Harueij. 1574."
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[50] Cited in E. De Selincourt's Introduction to the Oxford one-volume *Spenser*.

Spenser had a precedent—the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. In it occurs Anchises' explanation of the nature of the universe and of the soul.[51] This cosmic philosophy is a poetic blending of mystical beliefs (Pythagorean and Platonic with others) to fashion a dramatically useful myth of the pre-existence of souls in the Elysian Fields.[52] Anchises begins with some exposition of the nature of the physical universe and of the origin of living beings:

> inde hominum pecudumque genus vitaeque volantum
> et quae marmoreo fert monstra sub aequore pontus.[53]

He proceeds to expound the nature of sin: how human emotions with all their attendant evils derive from the necessary contamination of the soul by the body. He explains the purification which the souls must undergo; a few, gradually purified, remain forever in Elysium; all the rest after a specified period of purgation must return to earth:

> has omnis, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos,
> Lethaeum ad fluvium deus evocat agmine magno,
> scilicet immemores supera ut convexa revisant
> rursus, et incipiant in corpora velle reverti.[54]

This short myth of Vergil's making contains in brief a cosmic philosophy, with some traces of mechanistic elements fused into its mysticism. The passage is by no means purely ethical or religious; it is not a philosophy of moral values, of the way to the good life. It is rather a description of the behavior of certain natural laws, and how they affect the vast majority of mankind. It tends toward the objectivity of a mechanistic philosophy.

In the Garden of Adonis passage,[55] Spenser tells of "the first seminarie Of all things." Old Genius lets out those souls that desire to come into the world and be clothed "with fleshly weedes." Such as he chooses and fate ordains, "he clothes with sinfull mire," and lets into the world. After death, Genius admits the souls, who remain "some thousand yeares" before they are "clad with other hew" or return to the world to begin another cycle:

[51] *Aeneid* 6. 724-751.
[52] Frank, *op. cit.*, p. 189.
[53] Cf. *F. Q.* 3.6.35.
[54] Cf. *F. Q.* 3.6.32 f.
[55] *F. Q.* 3. 6. 30 ff.

So like a wheele around they runne from old to new.

In the Garden " infinite shapes of creatures " are bred: some monstrous, some fit for reasonable souls, some for beasts, some for birds, and some for fish. Their form, of course, is mortal. But their substance, which Chaos supplies, is eternal, and so can be used again and again. The one destructive force in the Garden is Time, to which all living things are subject. Else this Garden would be a perfect Paradise.

When we examine the entire passage, we find in it a blending of mysticism and mechanism, of Plato and Ovid and Lucretius.[56] The earlier portion of Spenser's " mystical account of generation " is composed of ideas partly Platonic and partly Lucretian; the latter portion, his exposition of the atomic theory, is primarily Lucretian. On the other hand, this Lucretian hypothesis has been vigorously attacked. Dr. Stirling, for instance, argues that Golding's *Epistle* and his translation of Ovid furnish the immediate source for all the Lucretian elements. However, to see Spenser as " a popularizer of already popularized material " is perhaps a drift towards over-simplification. Furthermore, Spenser's habitual eclecticism would suggest that he was not only aware of the Lucretian implications, but was deliberately fusing Lucretian ideas with Ovidian and Platonic.[57]

So much has recently been made of Spenser's use of secondary sources that one is likely to forget that Spenser knew and used the originals, that he could return to a primary source. A clear case in point occurs in Book 2. 12, during Guyon's voyage to the Bower of Bliss. Now the chief source of Canto 12 is obviously Tasso's account of the rescue of Rinaldo from Armida's

[56] See Professor Osgood's condensation of the Garden of Adonis literature in the Variorum *Spenser* 3 (1934). 340-352.

[57] Dr. Lotspeich (*op. cit.*, p. 23) thus states his conclusion, based upon a comprehensive study of Spenser's classical sources: " He [Spenser] uses his philosophic sources, not in the spirit of a philosopher who would integrate his thought by an appeal to the thinkers of the past, but in the spirit of a poet who is seeking 'to fill every rift of his subject with ore,' to give dignity and scope to his narrative by gathering into it doctrine and idea as well as imagery and incident."

And Dr. Lotspeich proceeds to cite the Temple of Venus (4. 10. 38 ff.), which is a remarkable example of Spenser's blending of a translation of the opening lines of Lucretius with Platonism. " His Venus is, then, Lucretian, earthly, materialistic. But in the same episode, Venus presides over a group of lovers who embody a central doctrine of Platonism and the whole canto is conceived in terms of the medieval court of love tradition, which is certainly not Lucretian."

delightful isle. The two rescuers land at the port, which is almost a replica of the port in *Aeneid* 1. 159-69. Spenser, however, omits much of the picturesque Vergilian detail which Tasso had so felicitously employed, and fastens upon one phrase which Tasso had omitted—" nympharum domus." So Spenser makes his port the home of his mermaid-sirens, but not, as one might have expected, the port to the Bower of Bliss.[58]

Moreover, Spenser, like Milton, is interested in the physical rather than the ethical or religious implications of Lucretian materialism. And the Garden of Adonis passage, like the exposition given by Anchises, has scant utility in the field of practical morals. The same is true of the Mutabilitie cantos, where Spenser sets forth the Rule of Change. Again he draws upon Ovid. Yet from the fifth book of Lucretius comes the idea not of mere shifting from shape to shape, but of mutability, of the life-cycle from " first beginnings " to the mature creature, which through decay and death returns to " substaunce," out of which new creatures are formed.

So, whatever may be the source of Spenser's physics—the Hymn to Venus (4. 10. 44-47) is admirable proof of Spenser's acquaintance with *De Rerum Natura,* if additional proof were needed—the *Faerie Queene* does contain two mystical passages in which there is a fusion of Platonism with material from Ovid and stuff from mechanistic philosophy. Spenser thus has included two passages of natural philosophy in his epic. Furthermore, there is a distinct similarity between certain ideas in the Garden of Adonis passage and the exposition of Anchises in *Aeneid* 6. Vergil, to be sure, did not furnish the material for Spenser's two passages. Nevertheless, those Vergilian parallels suggest more than a chance reminiscence. They suggest that Spenser found in the *Aeneid* the precedent for including natural philosophy in an epic. For Spenser, aware of the enthusiastic praise that Renaissance critics lavished upon Vergil's fruitful use of natural philosophy in the *Aeneid,* turned the stuff of science into poetry. And, what is more, he widened the scope of the epic so that it again set forth a cosmic philosophy. Here again we may see Spenser learning from his master Vergil how to create a more significant poetry.

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[58] 2. 12. 30.

VITA

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